

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, April 21. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W** Hether there were any men before Adam?

Ans. I look upon this Question to be as sensible as—Whether there is any *Ver. ver* before an *Unite*? The first admits of no former. If we believe there was e're such a *Man* as *Adam*, we must believe the rest of the *History*, that he was the *Father* of all *Living*, and made the last day of the *Creation*; and that the *Creation* of all visible things, the heavenly as well as earthly *Bodies*, educed out of *Chaos* or the first matter. So that there could be neither *Man*, nor so much as a *Place*, for him or any other material *Being*, matter it self that we know of, being not so much as then made. But whether or no there might not be more *Worlds* before this, I shan't determine, though 'tis certain even to a demonstration, that if there were such *Worlds* they cou'd not be *Eternal*.

Quest. 2. What are the Souls of Brutes? Whether they have true Reason, and how they differ from that of Man?

Ans. These Questions, though proposed distinctly, and as appears, by different Persons, are here put together, because of their near depending on each other, as all of 'em on that grand difficulty which we endeavoured to solve in the last but one, concerning the Soul of Man.

In answer to the first Branch. We are unwilling to allow the Soul of a Brute an immaterial substance, both because we thereby shall give up a great Argument for the Immortality of our own Souls, and because it's highly unphilosophical to introduce any superior order of Beings where we can solve all by the known powers of an Inferiour one, or at least by the primary and remote Influence, not immediate action of what is superior, in giving such Forces and Powers to any thing as by its own Nature it appears capable of. Now, though it must be own'd there appears Signatures sufficiently legible of infinite Wisdom in the Actions even of brute Creatures, yet there are none of those Actions that we know of, (and of such only we are to dispute) whereof matter is not capable.

We affirm then, with that Philosophical Liberty which Reason requires, we grant all others, that the Souls of Brutes, or the principle of Sensation and Operation within them, are only the finest Particles of matter, endued with a brisk motion, therefore a sort of fire, which is the immediate original of their vegetative and sensible Operations.

They can't have true Reason, because they have not, that can be prov'd (and the World is not in an humour to give more,) either any proper Reflexion, or at least any Consciousness of such Reflexion. A Glass has an Image represented, and if another Glass is placed before it, very prettily reflected less and less from

one to the other; but this the Glass knows nothing of, no more does the Brute that we either do or can discover by his Actions.

Instinct is not Reason. Brutes have one, not t'other. 'Tis no puzzling Term, but a real distinct power given to a Creature by the first Cause to preserve its own Being, and (in Brutes) to be serviceable to Mankind, whereof that Creature is not conscious. Man has something of the same Nature, Children stir their Eyes, and perform many other like Actions from this Instinct, not Reason. Even Plants have it in their Sympathies and Antipathies, the sensitive more eminently, yet none says they have Reason.

A Brutes Soul differs from a Mans just as much as a Mans from a Brutes, and how much that is, any may see who'll turn to the fore-mentioned Paper.

Quest. 3. How a Man shall know when he dreams, or is really awake?

Ans. Some great men have puzzled this Question to that degree, that it mayn't be altogether unworthy an Answer. The ingenious Descartes in his Meditations, even where he is laying his first Principles, to be the Ground-work of all his future Philosophy, carries the difficulty very high—according to his Observation and common Experience, we grant that the fancy produces many strange effects, in some Persons of a warm Imagination, and that so lively that unless they had Reason to assist, 'tis impossible when asleep and in a Dream to know we are so; but on the other side all men may know when they are not asleep unless they dream waking. I know I see, by seeing and reflecting upon't; in the same manner here—The Actions of Mind and Body in a dream are confused and disturbed; or if regular for a while, cannot be arbitrarily protracted to what length a man pleases. In a word, his Fancy then seems to have command of his Reason, as when waking his Reason of his Fancy. If this won't satisfie the Querist, but he's resolved still to make new Objections, let him still believe if he please, that he's in a dream, but give us leave not to dream any longer with him.

Quest. 4. Whether there may be an Impartial and true History in the World? (Sacred Writ excepted.)

Ans. With all due Reverence to my Lord Verulam, who for some reasons which we shall consider by and by, affirmed, That he believed as little the Histories of the time past, as he did the Prophecies of the time to come, we shall endeavour to prove the affirmative. That great Man was wont to say, those that write the Actions of their own Age, are forced to favour the upper Party; under penalty of their Works seeing any other light than that of the Flames; and those that write the History of former Ages must needs be ignorant of several

several Accidents that would circumstantiate the Action into good or bad, and must take all upon Tradition, and so necessarily lose rigid Truth. Those that write the Lives of single men, must needs be either Panegyrist or Calumniators, their design being to set out either a pattern of Vertue or Vice, without the faults attending the Vertuous, or good Actions of the Vicious. As to the History of Times and Ages we may expect an Impartial Account by means of a sudden Revolution of State, when the Historian that knew and durst not speak the truth is yet surviving, and has his protection in speaking the Truth; so 'tis also of particular Persons, which notwithstanding his Lordships Conclusion, have had the fair dealing of both their Vertues and Vices Impartially set forth; but we have yet a more certain way to come by truth, for the History of *England*, read the *French* and *Dutch* Historians, and compare 'em both with our own, and then we can't possibly miss, and so for other Nations, and likewise for Persons. For 'tis a certain Maxime, that if we weigh the Interests and Prejudices of things and Persons together, we may by Collateral Circumstances, find out the naked truth.

Quest. 5. *Whether there be any local Heaven or Hell, and whether the Fire of the latter be metaphorical or real?*

Ans. The Accidents or Properties of the invisible World we can know little or nothing of but by Comparison with things visible, if not otherwise reveal'd, since Reason leaves us almost entirely in the dark. If there be Bodies in Heaven, it must be at this present a Place to contain 'em, since according to the most intelligible Definition of Place, that and Body being Correlates, mutually suppose each other. But that there are Bodies there, Revelation assures us; for if it should be granted that *Enoch* and *Elias* either lost their Bodies or went no further than *Paradise*; we are sure that there is a greater than both, who with that very Body wherein he appear'd to *Mary*, now sits at the right hand of *Glory*, 'till the Consummation of all things. This for Heaven; but as for Hell, there appears no such Reason to make it a determin'd Place, because it has no Bodies that we know of contain'd therein, unless we imagine, and we can do no more, that *Dathan* and *Abiram*, &c. went down into Hell, as well as the *Grave*, for 'tis not improbable that there may be vast Cavities in the Earth, which supposing the Shell of it to be a thousand Miles thick, will be yet of an immense Capacity, may serve for the Prison of unhappy Souls, and be the proper receptacle of the Damned; and wicked Men, in that sense, as well as what is vulgarly receiv'd, go under the Earth: And if so, the subterranean Fires, which we know are there, because they sometimes make us such unwelcome Visits from *Hecla*, *Aetna*, and other Volcans, may be the very matter which shall torment such as come thither — at the Consummation of all things.

But this is Notion — what is more certain, is — that whether or no the Fire will be real after the Day of Judgment, the Torment will be so, unless infinite Truth can deceive us. And I can't imagine what any ill Man wou'd get by't, if it should be granted, that the Pains of that State, and when Bodies are there, Place too, should be so intense and high that our Culinary Fire can only serve for a faint Metaphor to express what will infinitely surpass it, both in intention and duration.

Quest. 6. *What was the Cause of the Angels Fall, and how came that first irregular Critical Thought into 'em when they had no Tempter, and were created pure and Holy?*

Ans. I think it more concerns us to avoid their Fate, than be too solicitous about the particular Cause on't. But we must not preach, but dispute, and therefore leaving that consideration, endeavour to answer both together.

The World has generally thought the Cause of their Fall to have been *Pride* or *Ambition*, to be equal to the most high, grounding their Conjecture on some passages in Holy

Writ, which sound that way; and this very reason seems to be got among the *Heathen*, in the Stories of their *Flam Wars*; nor can it be more graphically described, than in that of their Poet, who mentions it as a current old Tradition among 'em — *Affectasse seerunt regnum coeleste Gigantes*.

Others think 'twas Envy at the Creation and Privileges of Man, a Creature of a lower rank than themselves, whom yet they were oblig'd to serve; which I esteem more probable, the first, being so very absurd an Enterprise, that we can scarce suppose any Intelligent Being cou'd be guilty on't, 'till corrupted before by some other irregular thought, which might be the forementioned Envy, tho' their Understandings might be darken'd, and they less capable, if there be any such thing, of the highest.

And what if we shou'd at least Query whether the Angels had not also some not dispicable Notices of this latter Evil? The *Titans*, they say, were angry because *Satan* was seithron'd, and *Jupiter* made Lord of all. We know they had an earthly *Jupiter* as well as an heavenly; he was what they further tell us — *Creta satans*. Nor is't an impossible supposition that some footsteps might therein be imagin'd of Mans being made out of the Earth; — nay, perhaps the very words *Cretus*, *Creatus*, &c. may have the same Original. To push this no farther, we shall proceed on the latter supposition, and seeing there's no absurdity therein, assign Envy as the first Cause of the Angels Fall, whereof the Creation of Man was one accidental Cause, and their own defectibility or mutability another. For though defectibility, which is a kind of privative Term, mayn't be the Efficient Cause of any Action, I can see no reason why it mayn't be the accidental Cause of the deficiency or irregularity of such an Action — Nor is't any reflection on Gods Wisdom or Justice to make a Creature defectible, since that is as much included in the very Nature and Notion of a Creature as *Novitas Essendi*, or a Beginning of its being; 'tis enough that there was no necessity of such Defection imposed by him on those Creatures whom he had made.

The Astrologer that sent the Query in Numb. 5. viz. *Whether Judicial Astrology is lawful?* having by a second Letter resent'd the exposing of that undemonstrable Study, and having desired to know at what time our Answer was writ, on purpose to give an Answer to the Question we put the Astrologers, (Ans. 3. Numb. 6.) We think fit to tell him it was on Fryday, the 10th. of of this Instant, about 6 in the Afternoon; though we must tell him at the same time, he shows his further Weakness, in not finding that Hour by his Art. Yet however for the satisfaction of the World, if the Gentleman thinks his Judgment in its Exaltation, and that his next Scheme promise him an Ability to demonstrate the Fundamentals of Astrology; or if he will only show why such an Aspect must upon Necessity be good, and such a one bad; such a Planet in such a Sign have so many Dignities or Debilities, and neither more nor less, and subscribe his Name to what he Writes, We will promise to do him so much Justice as to Print it, without any alteration in our next Paper, with a Subscription of our Name to witness our open Recantation.

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Having had a Question put, *Whether Mermaids, resembling a Man more than other Fishes may be thought to be more rational than other Fishes*, we promise next Tuesday to satisfy the World with a curious Collection of Instances, all Authentick and Matter of Fact, with several diverting Opinions about their first productions — Also the 2 New Questions sent us, one about Archery, and the other concerning a Perpetual Motion, shall then be resolv'd — The Gentleman that sent 13 Theological Questions on the 16th. Instant, desiring to know by our next Paper whether we receiv'd 'em, we Answer, Yes, and will endeavour his satisfaction the latter end of the Volume. — Likewise those two Gentlemen that so earnestly desire a speedy Answer to 3 weighty Questions about Marriages and Melancholly, may expect an answer to them next Tuesday at farthest.

We shall all along publish every Volume (with a Preface and Index to it) as soon as ever we have receiv'd Theological and other Questions enough to fill up Numb. 30. that so those Querists that stay longest for Answers may not think us tedious.